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34 AUG
DIGITAL EDITION

SPAWN



image® COMICS PRESENTS:

"RIPPLES"



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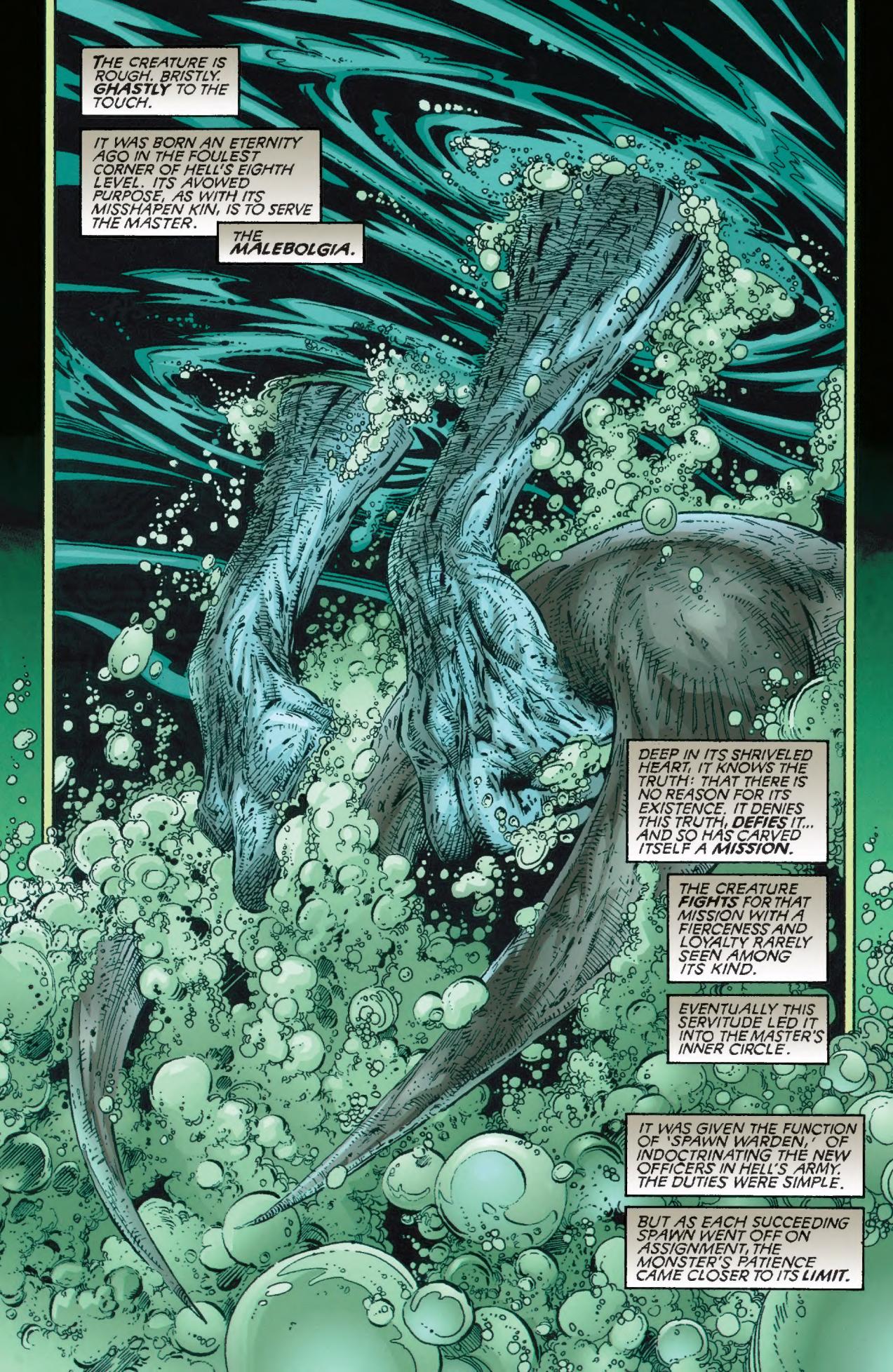
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THE CREATURE IS
ROUGH, BRISTLY,
GHASTLY TO THE
TOUCH.

IT WAS BORN AN ETERNITY
AGO IN THE FOULEST
CORNER OF HELL'S EIGHTH
LEVEL. ITS AVOWED
PURPOSE, AS WITH ITS
MISSHAPEKIN, IS TO SERVE
THE MASTER.

THE
MALEBOLGIA.

DEEP IN ITS SHRIVELED
HEART, IT KNOWS THE
TRUTH: THAT THERE IS
NO REASON FOR ITS
EXISTENCE. IT DENIES
THIS TRUTH, DEFIES IT...
AND SO HAS CARVED
ITSELF A MISSION.

THE CREATURE
FIGHTS FOR THAT
MISSION WITH A
FIERCENESS AND
LOYALTY RARELY
SEEN AMONG
ITS KIND.

EVENTUALLY THIS
SERVITUDE LED IT
INTO THE MASTER'S
INNER CIRCLE.

IT WAS GIVEN THE FUNCTION
OF 'SPAWN WARDEN,' OF
indoctrinating the new
officers in Hell's Army.
The duties were simple.

BUT AS EACH SUCCEEDING
SPAWN WENT OFF ON
ASSIGNMENT, THE
MONSTER'S PATIENCE
CAME CLOSER TO ITS LIMIT.

WHY WERE OUTSIDERS
BEING GIVEN SUCH OPPOR-
TUNITIES TO ADVANCE?
WEREN'T THE LOCALS BETTER
CONDITIONED FOR THE
GREAT WAR WITH GOD?

THE QUESTIONS STARTED AS
A JOKE, BUT WITH EACH
FAILED HELLSPAWN THE
NAGGING DOUBTS BECAME
MORE URGENT...

...BUT THE
CREATURE
NEVER
SHOWED ITS
APPREHENSION.

IT DIDN'T DARE. THE FAMILY
WOULD BE DISGRACED AND
HE WOULD CERTAINLY
BECOME AN OUTCAST. THUS
DID THE CENTURIES PASS.

HIS DESIRE TO PLEASE THE
MASTER BECAME INSATIABLE.
HE BECAME FAR MORE
VICIOUS THAN NECESSARY.

THE TITLE 'VIOLATOR' WAS
BESTOWED, AND WORN
LIKE A BADGE OF HONOR.

THOSE DOUBTS, THOUGH,
CAUSED HIM TO STRAY
ODDLY ON A PARTICULAR
MISSION. HE FELL FROM
FAVOR AND WAS
BANISHED TO EARTH.

NOW, VIOLATOR'S
ONLY HOPE IS TO
BEAT THE
CURRENT HELL-
SPAWN, BOTH
PHYSICALLY AND
EMOTIONALLY.

HOPPL!

JUST NOW,
THAT PLAN
HAS HIT A
FEW BUMPS.

THEIR MOST RECENT
STRUGGLE HAD
BARELY BEGUN WHEN
THEY WERE INTERRU-
PTED BY A RUPTURED
PIPELINE. SOME CRAZY
HUMAN HAD THEN SEEN
FIT TO SAVE THE DEMON
FROM DROWNING.

THAT'S IT,
RUN AWAY,
EARTH SCUM!

WHO NEEDS YOUR DAMN
HELP ANYWAY? I CAN
BREATHE AIR OR
WATER...

THE
SILHOUETTE
VANISHES,
LEAVING ONLY
THE ECHO OF
SPLASHING
FOOTSTEPS.

YOU'RE
LUCKY I'M
NOT IN THE
MOOD FOR
CASUAL
DISMEMBER-
MENT.



ANY

OTHER

CLOWNING AROUND.

OR

THE GROTESQUE TRANSFORMATION LASTS BUT A FEW HEARTBEATS. LEFT IN THE DEMON'S PLACE IS ITS BEST ATTEMPT AT BEING HUMAN.

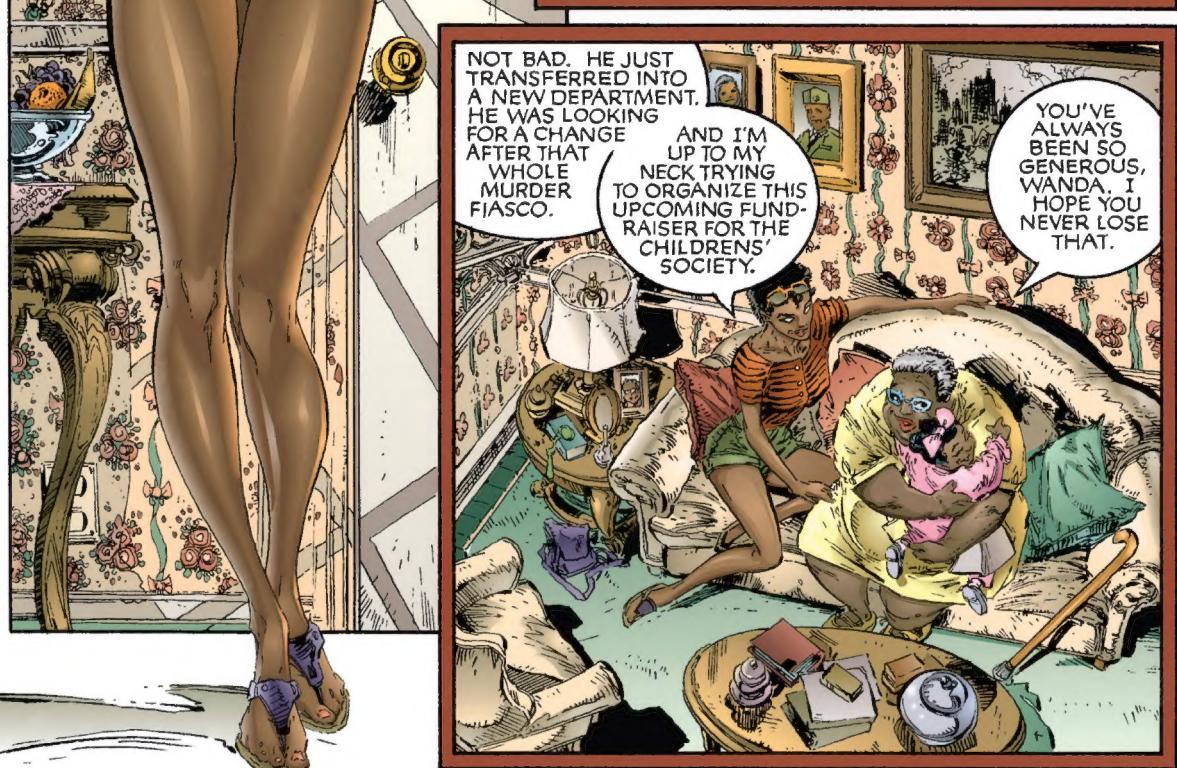
FART!

SOMETHING'S WRONG--
BIG TIME!!
AIN'T NO WAY
SPAWNIE'S UNIFORM
SHOULD HAVE
TRANSMUTED THIS
FAST. THE FRIGGIN'
THING COULD HAVE
DONE ME SOME
SERIOUS
DAMAGE.

WHICH
ONLY MAKES
MY ORIGINAL
INTENT OF
DESTROYING
HIM FROM A
DISTANCE MORE
VALID.

IT'S A
SLIGHT
CURVEBALL,
BUT NOTHIN'
I CAN'T
HIT.

SIX DAYS
WILL PASS
BEFORE
HE ACTS
AGAIN.



AS ONE CHILD SETTLES INTO HER GRANDMA'S SWEET EMBRACE, ANOTHER AMBLES UNPROTECTED THROUGH AN URBAN CESSPOOL.



TUGGED AT,
PULLED.
THE
YOUNG BOY
BARELY PAYS
ATTENTION.

AT
TEN
YEARS-
OF AGE
THERE IS
VERY
LITTLE
HE
HASN'T
SEEN.

HE IS JUST
ANOTHER
OF SOCIETY'S
FORGOTTEN
VICTIMS.



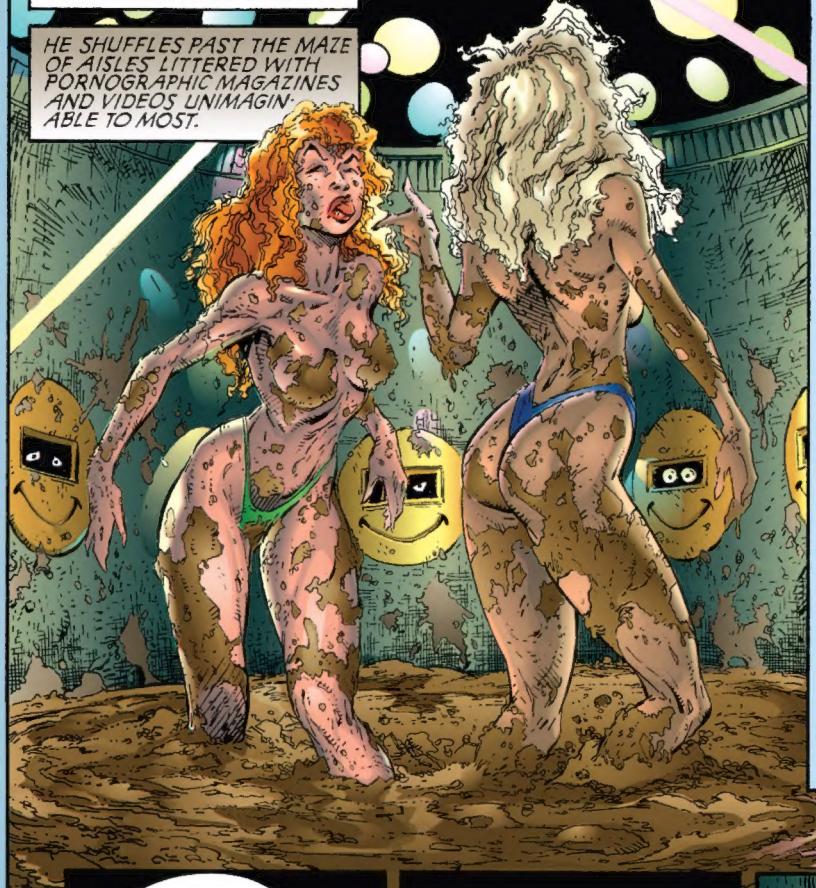


GOOD.
NOW GET THE
HELL OUTTA
HERE. I GOT ME
ANOTHER
APPOINT-
MENT.

FOR STINKY, THAT 'APPOINTMENT' IS A SHORT WALK DOWN THE STREET, IN A BUILDING MARKED ONLY BY A SINGLE RED LIGHT DANGLING ABOVE A BLACK STEEL DOOR.

HE SHUFFLES PAST THE MAZE OF AISLES LITTERED WITH PORNOGRAPHIC MAGAZINES AND VIDEOS UNIMAGINABLE TO MOST.

AT LAST, THROUGH A CURTAIN AND UNDERLIT HALLWAY, HE ENTERS HIS PRIVATE CONFINES.



COME ON!
COME ON!

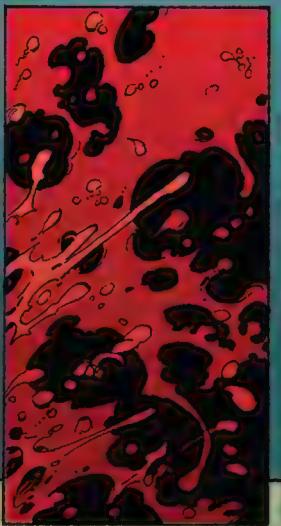
Oh YES.
DO IT!

DO IT
TO ME
GOOD!

THE NOISES CREATED BY THE WRESTLERS PURPOSELY MASK THE ACTIVITIES OF THOSE HIDDEN BEHIND THESE WALLS.



MUFFLING
THEIR
PLEASURE...



AND PAIN.



TWISTED IN BETWEEN PURGATORY AND LIMBO IS THE VAST WASTELAND OF HELL'S EIGHTH LEVEL. THE SHADOW OF THIS BLACK VOID CREEPS FAR CLOSER TO THE EARTHLY REALM THAN WE CARE TO THINK ABOUT.

IT'S HERE THAT THE ARMIES OF THE DAMNED ARE ASSEMBLED AND TRAINED, AWAITING THE SIGNAL TO BEGIN THE GLORIOUS WAR AGAINST THE HEAVENS: **ARMAGEDDON**.

THAT EVENTUAL WAR IS THE ONLY PURPOSE FOR THIS CREATURE, **THE MALEBOLGIA**, ONE OF THE HIGH-RANKING DEVILS. HE OVERSEES THE SWELLING SEA OF TROOPS, AND OCCASIONALLY CHOOSES OFFICERS TO LEAD THEM.

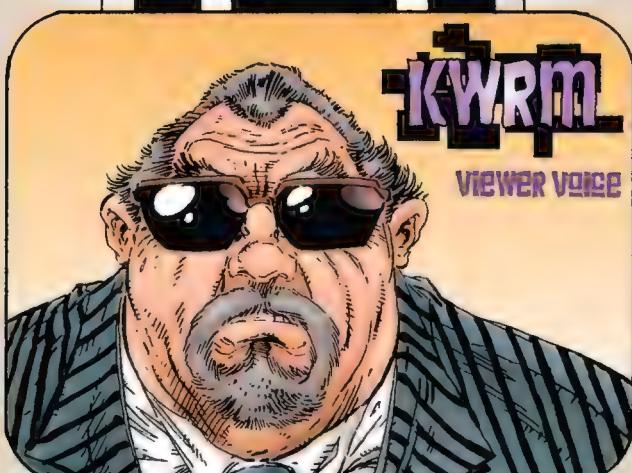
HIS LATEST HELSPAWN-IN-TRAINING IS COMING ALONG AS PLANNED.

Delude yourself all you wish, Simmons, but you cannot run away from yourself.

There is a reason you were chosen from among the tortured millions.

Death. Evil. Blackness. Those seeds were planted in you at birth.

Soon. Very soon. All shall come to fruition.



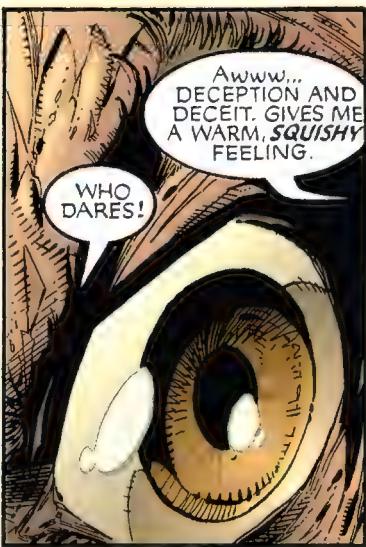
THE SITUATION IN BOSNIA INTENSIFIES AS NEITHER BOSNIAN DIPLOMATS NOR THEIR SERBIAN COUNTERPARTS SEEM WILLING TO RESUME PEACEKEEPING TALKS. THE PRESIDENT'S MUCH-PUBLICIZED VISIT TO BOSNIA WAS CUT UNEXPECTEDLY SHORT, THREE FEWER DAYS THAN PLANNED. AFTER THE BOSNIAN PRESIDENT WALKED OUT DURING OUR PRESIDENT'S PRESENTATION REGARDING THE ONGOING BORDER DISPUTE, CITING FAVORITISM TOWARD THE SERBS, THE BOSNIAN PRESIDENT ADVISED THE COMMITTEE THAT BOSNIAN PARTICIPATION WOULD RESUME ONLY IF THE U. S. PRESIDENT WAS REMOVED FROM THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. CLOSER TO HOME, POLICE IN NEW YORK CITY ARE STILL INVESTIGATING A GRUESOME MURDER IN THE RED LIGHT DISTRICT. THERE ARE NO REPORTED SUSPECTS AT THIS TIME.

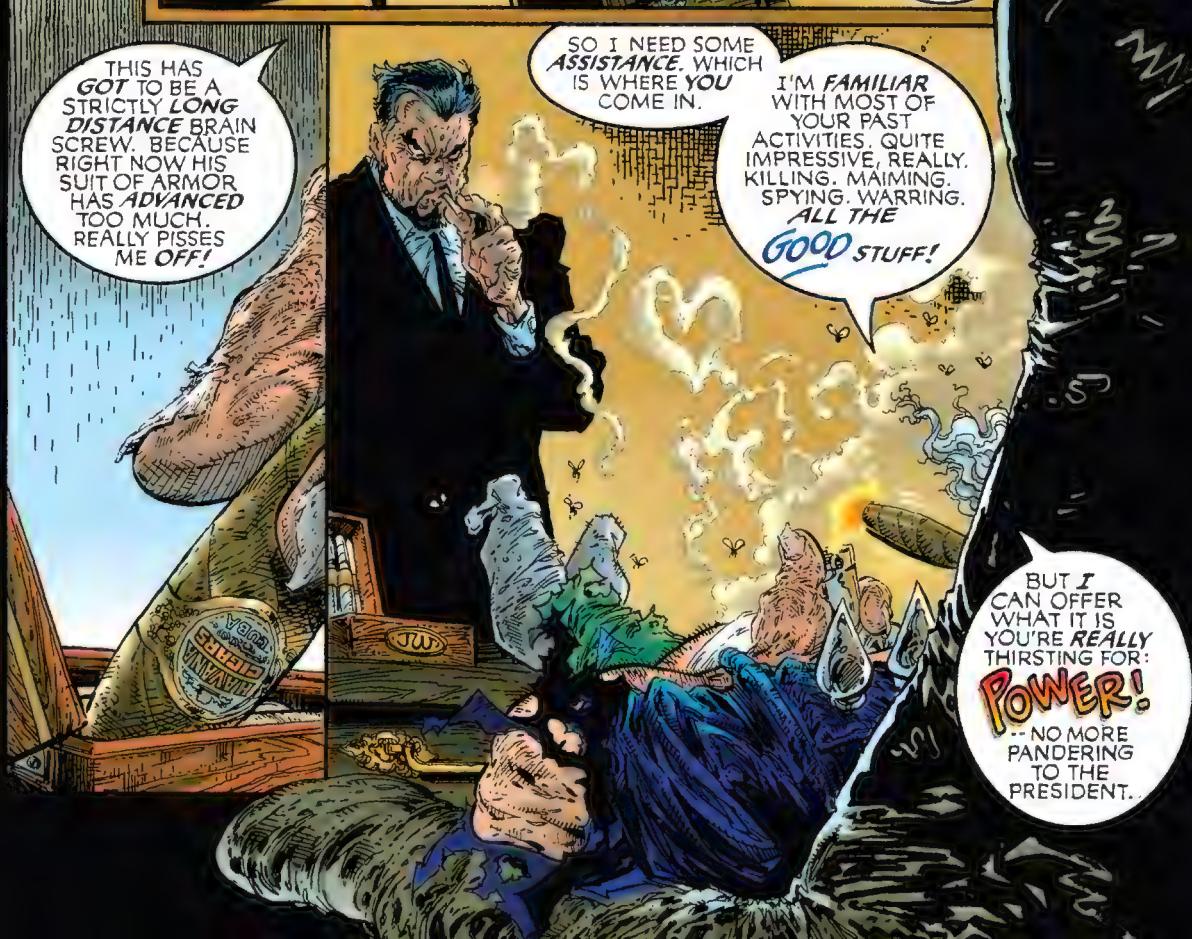
AS THE INTERMINABLE DRUG WAR IN NEW YORK CITY ESCALATES, ANOTHER PAWN FALLS VICTIM TO A *GRUESOME* ATTACK IN A PORN THEATER. POLICE HAD TO RESORT TO DENTAL RECORDS IN AN ATTEMPT TO IDENTIFY THE BODY. SOURCES INDICATE THAT THE VICTIM HAD OVER A *DOZEN* BROKEN BONES. A BLOOD SPATTER EXPERT BEGINS HIS INVESTIGATION TODAY IN AN ATTEMPT TO DETERMINE WHAT, IF ANY, WEAPON WAS USED TO SEVER THE VICTIM'S HEAD. OFFICIALS ARE BAFFLED BY THE EXTENT OF THE MUTILATION, AND CANNOT DETERMINE IF THE ATTACK WAS COMMITTED BY A HUMAN OR SOME WILD ANIMAL. EVEN THOUGH THE RECENT *VAMPIRE* CASE HAS BEEN CLOSED, POLICE ARE NOT RULING OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A CONNECTION. IS THIS JUST ANOTHER MEANINGLESS CRIME, OR A REVENGE HIT FOR A DRUG DEAL GONE BAD? BEFORE A MOTIVE CAN BE SUGGESTED, POLICE SAY THE VICTIM'S IDENTITY MUST FIRST BE DETERMINED. CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE. SOUNDS FAIR TO ME.

BIG SURPRISE. OUR OVERWHELMINGLY ELECTED PRESIDENT HAS PUT HIS FOOT IN HIS MOUTH ONCE AGAIN, THIS TIME AS HIS PROPOSAL FOR ENDING THE BOSNIAN CONFLICT WENT OVER LIKE A LEAD BALLOON. THE PRESIDENT IS WASTING OUR VALUABLE TIME TRYING TO MAKE HIS MARK IN HISTORY. I GUESS HE'S NOT PLANNING ON RETURNING FOR ANOTHER FOUR YEARS, SO THIS WOULD BE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY. INSTEAD OF GETTING THE JOB DONE, AS *THIS* CITIZEN WOULD LIKE TO DO, HE PUSSY-FOOTS AROUND THE ISSUE, ACCOMPLISHING *NOTHING*. BACK AT HOME, WE KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH SIMILAR PROBLEMS. FOR INSTANCE, LAST NIGHT'S GRUESOME MURDER IN NEW YORK. OBVIOUSLY THIS GUY, ANOTHER DRUG-PUSHING PUNK OR MAFIA THUG, GOT WHAT WAS *COMING* TO HIM. HE SCREWED SOMEONE OVER AND PAID THE PRICE. SHORT, SWEET, AND TO THE POINT. THE PRESIDENT COULD *LEARN* SOMETHING FROM THIS.

AT 2 A.M. INTELLIGENCE DIRECTOR JASON WYNN HAD ASSUMED HE'D BE ABLE TO GET IN ANOTHER PRODUCTIVE ALL-NIGHTER.

MANIPULATION OF NATIONAL SECURITY MISSIONS IS BEST DONE FAR FROM THE LIGHT OF DAY.





HIM AND HIS
ADMINISTRATION ARE
DUMBER THAN A SACK OF
HAMMERS. THEY DON'T
HAVE A **CLUE** ABOUT YOUR
SECRET AGENDA

LIKE THIS
FILE...
hmmmm...

NAUGHTY,
NAUGHTY LITTLE
BOY. A FULL-SCALE
AIR SWEEP OF A
'FRIENDLY' ARMY, ENGI-
NEERED BY ONE OF
AMERICA'S ENEMIES. IN
RETURN, THEY GET A
SECRET LINE OF CREDIT
WITH A STRUGGLING
DEFENSE CON-
TRACTOR.

THEY
GET TO
CONTINUE THEIR
WARS AGAINST
YOUR ALLIES--
YOUR INTELLIGENCE
AGENCY'S MORE
ESSENTIAL THAN
EVER--

--AND
YOU COME
OUT WITH
TWELVE
MILLION
BUCKS OF
LAUNDERED
KICKBACKS
IN YOUR
SWISS
ACCOUNT.

GET
TO YOUR
POINT.

TERRY
FITZGERALD.
I SEE BY THIS
OTHER FILE
THAT HE
RECENTLY TRANS-
FERRED TO YOUR
OFFICE.

PERFECT.
IT'LL MAKE
THINGS EASIER.
I WANT YOU TO
BEFRIEND HIM.
GAIN HIS **CONFI-**
DENCE...

...WHILE
AT THE SAME
TIME DO A
NUMBER ON
THOSE HE
CARES ABOUT.
A SORT OF
JEKYLL-
AND-HYDE
THING.

THAT MEANS
HIS WIFE. KID.
GRANNIE. WHO-
EVER. PUSH
THEM. **HARD!**

AND WHEN
THE TIME IS
RIGHT I'LL
LET YOU **IN**
ON SOME-
THING.

LIKE
WHO OUR
HERO
REALLY
IS.

IT'LL
DRIVE
OLD SPAWNIE
SIMPLY
BATTY!
- WHICH IS A
GOOD
THING.

IT'S
GOING TO
GIVE YOU
A **HEART**
ATTACK.
PROMISE!

HIS TESTS HAVE ALL COME UP NEGATIVE. THE INJURIES ARE HEALING SATISFACTORILY. HIS RECOVERY IS ON TARGET.

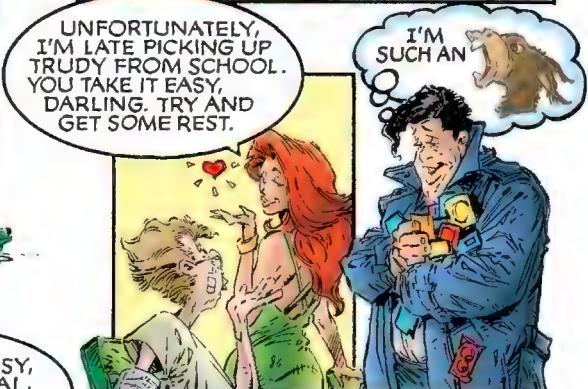
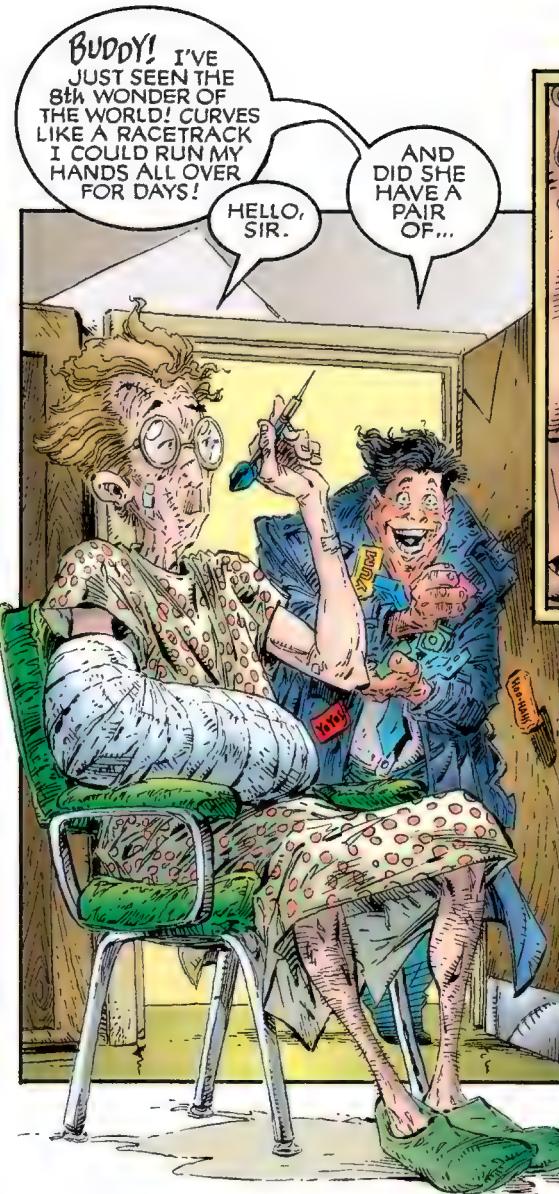
THOK



GOOD DAY, MISS. I COULDN'T HELP BUT NOTICE THAT ATTRACTIVE BREAST... I MEAN... DRESS YOU'RE WEARING, AND WAS WONDERING IF...

SORRY, BUT I'M ON MY WAY TO SEE SOMEBODY. HAVE A NICE DAY.





JASON WYNN'S BEEN MULLING OVER THE DWARFISH CLOWN'S VISIT FOR THE PAST 20 HOURS. THE PEST KNEW TOO MUCH. THE PROPOSAL MADE SENSE... THOUGH IT WOULD BACK HIM INTO A CORNER. DAMN.

BRRING

MR. WYNN.
THE PRESIDENT IS
ON LINE ONE.

MR.
PRESIDENT?

AFTERNOON,
JASON. I WANT TO
THANK YOU PERSONALLY
FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE IN
GETTING US OUT OF THAT
LITTLE 'SITUATION'
IN BOSNIA.

I'VE BEEN
ADVISED THAT YOU
SPEARHEADED THE
RESOLUTION. I
OWE YOU ONE.
THANKS.

Uh...
YOU'RE
WELCOME,
SIR...

WHAT
MISSION?
I DIDN'T
SANCTION
ANY...

BRRING

I TAKE IT
YOU'VE HEARD FROM
YOUR PAL. WELL,
CONSIDER IT A LITTLE
PREVIEW OF THINGS TO
COME. A DOWN
PAYMENT, IF
YOU WILL.

HOPE YOU'RE
CLEAR ON THE
SITUATION NOW.
TOODLE-OO, BUDDY!
SAY HELLO TO
TERRY FOR ME...!

A PARTICULAR
NEW YORK CITY
ALLEY...

I DON'T KNOW
WHAT VIOLATOR'S THINKING.
ATTACK ME, THEN JUST
DISAPPEAR? DOESN'T
MAKE SENSE.

OH, NO?
THEN YOU'RE
NOT PAYING
ATTENTION.

MEANING?

I'M
NOT LIKE
HIM!

REALLY?
YOUR LATEST
ACTIONS SAY
OTHER-
WISE.

STINKY WAS
PREYING ON
CHILDREN, TURNING
THEM INTO HIS
OWN KIND. I JUST
SENT OUT A LOUD
MESSAGE TO
OTHERS
LIKE HIM.

PRECISELY.

AND THAT MEANT
USING YOUR TRAINING.
HE DIDN'T STAND A
CHANCE AGAINST YOU, AL.

HE'S TRYING
TO CONFUSE YOU.
KEEP YOU **DISTRACTED**.
AND WHEN HE
DOES THAT, YOUR
INSTINCTS TAKE
OVER... WHICH
IS WHAT HE
WANTS.

YOU SEE,
YOU AND HE
ARE TWO PEAS
IN A POD
ON SOME
LEVELS.

CAN'T
YOU SEE,
HELL
WANTS YOU
TO ACT LIKE
THIS.

IN SOME
CASES,
THEY'RE
RIGHT.

DAMN YOU, AL! YOU'RE
MAKING THIS TOO
EASY FOR THEM.

HERE, LET ME
ENLIGHTEN YOU A
BIT. THAT LITTLE BOY
TYRONE YOU WERE
SO CONCERNED
ABOUT-- HE RUNS
THOSE STREETS IN
HIS NEIGHBORHOOD.
HE'S BEEN IN AND OUT
OF DETENTION HALLS
SINCE HE WAS SIX.
BEEN SELLING
GUNS SINCE
SEVEN.

HE WAS
DIRECTLY IN-
VOLVED IN TWO
MURDERS, BUT
HIS AGE ALLOWED
HIM TO CIRCUM-
VENT ANY SEVERE
PUNISH-
MENT.

AND HE
WASN'T BEING
STRONGARMED
BY STINKY. JUST
THE OPPOSITE. THE
BOY'S DRUG BUSI-
NESS HAS BEEN
SLIPPING. HE WAS
JUST LOOKING
AT SOME NEW
SAMPLES.

YOUR
SOLUTION TO ALL
THIS? KILL WHAT
YOU DON'T UNDER-
STAND. LET YOUR
IGNORANCE RULE
THOSE GOVERNMENT-
TRAINED HOMICIDAL
INSTINCTS.

WHAT DO
YOU WANT
FROM ME
ANYWAYS,
COG?

FOR
YOU TO **FOCUS!**
-- USE YOUR POWER
WISELY. LIKE IT OR
NOT, YOU WERE
ASSASSINATED
UNDER ORDERS.

AND -
STOP THE
DENIALS. WHAT
YOU WERE IS
STILL A PART OF
YOU. HELL
MEANS TO
EXPLOIT
THAT.

THIS
ISN'T HOW
IT WAS
SUPPOSED
TO TURN
OUT.



I KNOW.

BUT IT'S
STILL
YOUR
PROBLEM.

"BECAUSE, LIKE IT OR NOT,
THERE IS A HOST OF OTHERS
TANGLED IN YOUR WEB.
IGNORING THEM WOULD
WEAVE A LIFE WITHOUT
PURPOSE."



6:8:8:7

"YOUR FRIENDS...
LOVED ONES...
WOULD FALL PREY
TO MUCH EVIL."

AS THE DAY COMES TO A CLOSE, TERRY FITZ-GERALD FINDS HIMSELF ALONE AT HIS NEW OFFICE AT C.I.A. HEADQUARTERS.



FINALLY, HE HAS A CHANCE TO PURSUE HIS ONLY REASON FOR REQUESTING A TRANSFER TO JASON WYNN'S DEPARTMENT IN THE FIRST PLACE:

FINDING OUT WHAT HIS NEW DEPARTMENT HEAD IS REALLY UP TO.

THE GUY IS SLICK. RETRACING HIS TRACKS WON'T BE EASY, ESPECIALLY WITH ALL THE SECURITY CHECKS INVOLVED. BUT THERE HAS TO BE SOMETHING HERE I CAN USE.

HIS INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES LOOK CLEAN. ALMOST TOO CLEAN.



THEN, A NOISE BEHIND HIM SNAPS TERRY BACK TO ATTENTION.





Tyrant
Lizard
King

EMPIRE

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